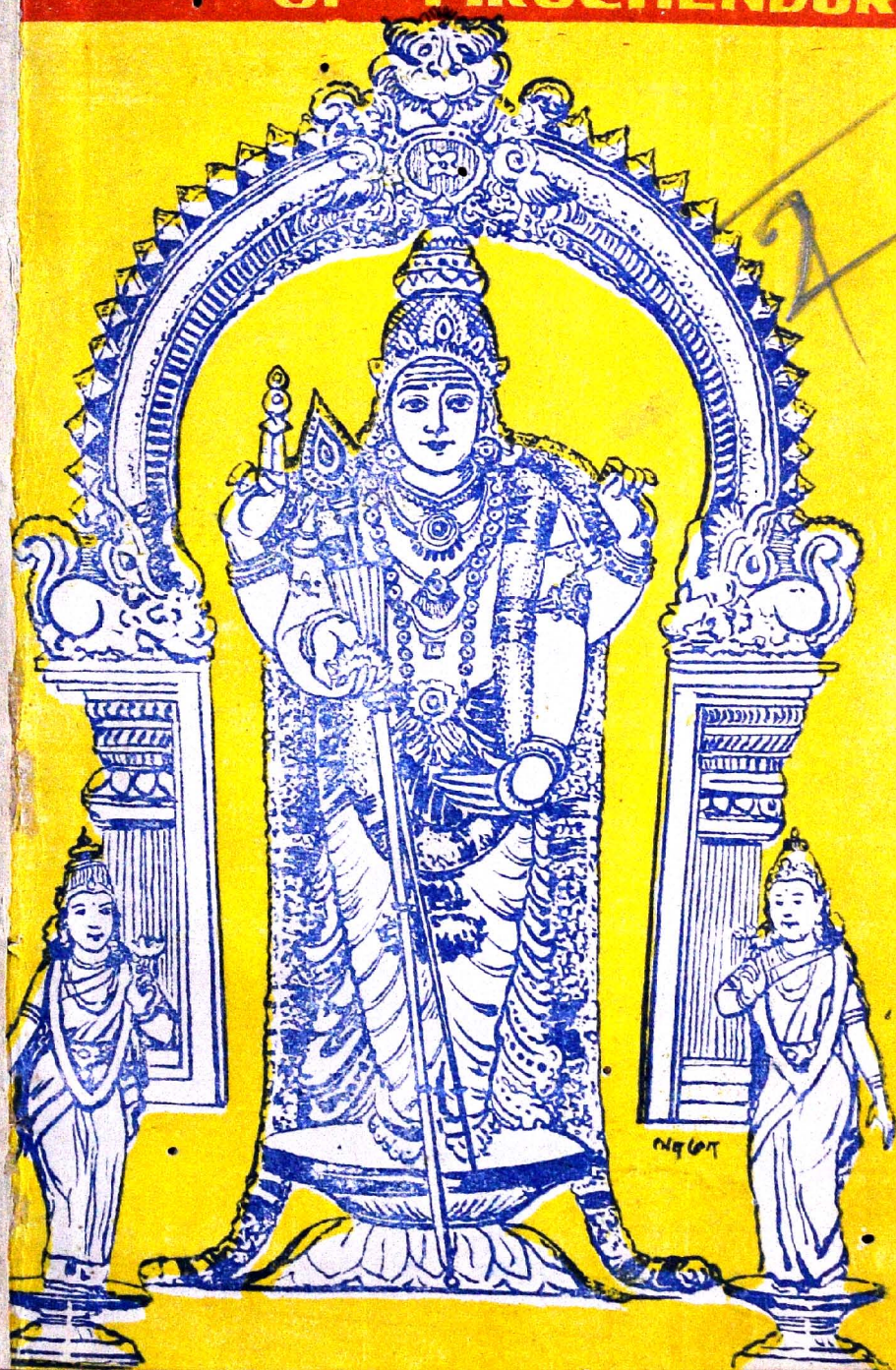


LORD MURUGA OF TIRUCHENDUR



Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur



Prof. **M. P. GURUSAMY**, M.A., M.Litt., D.G.T.,

(Diploma in Russian Language and Certificate
in Indian Culture)

HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS,
ADITANAR COLLEGE,
TIRUCHENDUR.



Publisher :
GURU-THEMOZHÍ,
117, sannathi street,
TIRUCHENDUR-628 215,
Tirunelveli District.

Price Rs. 2—50

Vannan Publication : Eng. 1

First Edition : Feb. 1980

Copyright : Prof. M. P. GURUSAMY



Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur

By

Mariappan Paraippatti Gurusamy (1936)



Printed By :

Gandhi Press, Srivaikuntam.

FOREWORD

Though the Supreme Being belongs to no Geographical locality, the practice of giving Him a local colour is found in the various cultures of the peoples. The worship of Lord Muruga has great significance for the Tamils as the hoary Tamil tradition identifies him as the God of the Tamils. However books which can throw light on all the aspects of the worship of Lord Muruga are not forthcoming in adequate numbers both in Tamil and English. Hence Prof. M. P. Gurusamy's booklet 'Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur' is a welcome addition to books on Lord Muruga.

Tamil literature is replete with hymnal offerings to Lord Muruga. The author, himself good at versification, has alluded to literary works from the Sangam period down to the present day. He has enriched his book drawing his material from various sources such as history, geography, sociology and legends.

The author's focus is mainly on Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur. But his account of the 'Six Great Bases' makes the concept of the worship of Muruga wider and more comprehensive.

I am particularly drawn towards Chapter V which describes the daily poojas and the seasonal festivals associated with the Tiruchendur temple. Each Hindu temple has its own unique way of conducting daily poojas. The author's vivid description of the import of each of the poojas of the Tiruchendur temple will widen the knowledge of the votaries and strengthen their faith.

Festivals which are evolved out of the social ethos reflect the spiritual exercise of the people. The author has done well to explicate the spiritual significance behind all the festivals with a minimal use of the technical terms of philosophical discussion.

Visitors and pilgrims coming to Tiruchendur will find in this work a very useful handbook as the writer has brought out clearly and succinctly the importance of the places in and around the temple. His graphic description of the lay out of the temple and pictures added will serve them as trusted guides.

This book is a valuable contribution by Prof. M. P. Gurusamy who as an author, has quite a good number of books in Tamil to his credit. I congratulate him on his new venture.

May Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur bless him to undertake many more noble works of this kind.

R. KANAGASABAPATHY,

Tiruchendur.

23 Feb. 1980.

}

Principal, Aditanar College,

Syndicate Member, Madurai Kamaraj
University.



PREFACE

It has been my long cherished desire to write a book on Lord Muruga. At the same I have been conscious of the inadequacy of the finite language to express fully the concepts about the Lord who is infinite. When I started writing this book I felt that the call came from Him indirectly.

In 1964 I came with my wife and children to Tiruchendur to worship Lord Muruga. While going round the Giri prakara of the temple my wife told me how delightful it would be to worship Him almost daily if we chose to settle down at Tiruchendur. I smiled aside her wishful thinking as I was then in the employ of Gandhiniketan Ashram at T. Kallupatti which had no connection whatsoever with Tiruchendur. In 1967 I joined the Department of Economics of Aditanar College at Tiruchendur. I felt our prayer was granted.

Again when the question of the choice of my topic for research arose my mind began to vacillate with every alternative that cropped up. I could resolve the problem when my principal, Prof. R. Kanagasabapathy suggested to me that I should choose some topic connected with Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur so that my service in the college would have relevance to the local community. Accordingly I chose the topic "Economics of Tiruchendur Lord Muruga's Temple". I took these occasions to be the call of the Lord to write about Him.

This book may be considered a "by-product" of my research. In the course of my data collection I realised the non-availability of books which could give a comprehensive account of Lord Muruga and the temple

at Tiruchendur. Hence it is not to be taken as a treatise. With His grace and in His good time I shall do an in depth study to bring out an enlarged volume, after completing my present research. Hence I request the valuable comments of the readers for the improvement of this book.

I sincerely thank my Principal, Prof. R. Kanagasabapathy, M. A., for the constant encouragement and inspiration that he gave me to write this book. My heartfelt thanks are due to him for the valuable foreword that he has written for this book despite his multifarious activities.

I acknowledge with thanks the immense help readily offered to me by Thiru C. V. Rajaram, B. A., B. L., Assistant Commissioner / Executive Officer of Tiruchendur Lord Subrahmaniya Swamy Temple to collect data for my research about the economy of this temple.

I am very grateful to my friend Thiru K. Alwar M. A., B. Com., M. Phil., of the Department of English of our college for his going through the manuscript and his suggestions for improving the language.

My thanks are also due to M/s Ravi Studio, Tiruchendur for sparing the photo and Thiru Va. Ma. the artist who designed the cover page. I thank M/S. Gandhi Press for printing the book and enabling me to bring out the book at relatively short period.

I hope that the devotees will patronize this book so that many more books of this type may be forthcoming.

Tiruchendur, }
27-2-1980.

M. P. Gurusamy

CONTENTS



	Page
Foreword: By Prof. R. Kanagasabapathy, M.A., ...	3
Preface ...	5
Prayer to Shanmuka, By Adi Sankara ...	8
1. The Great God — Lord Muruga ...	9
2. Significance of the Tiruchendur Temple ...	17
3. Historical Background and Description of the Temple ...	26
4. Skanda Purana and Tiruchendur ...	39
5. Poojas and Festivals of Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur ...	44
6. The Six Great Bases of Lord Muruga ...	50
7. Tiruchendur — A Pilgrim Centre ...	56
Bibliography ...	61



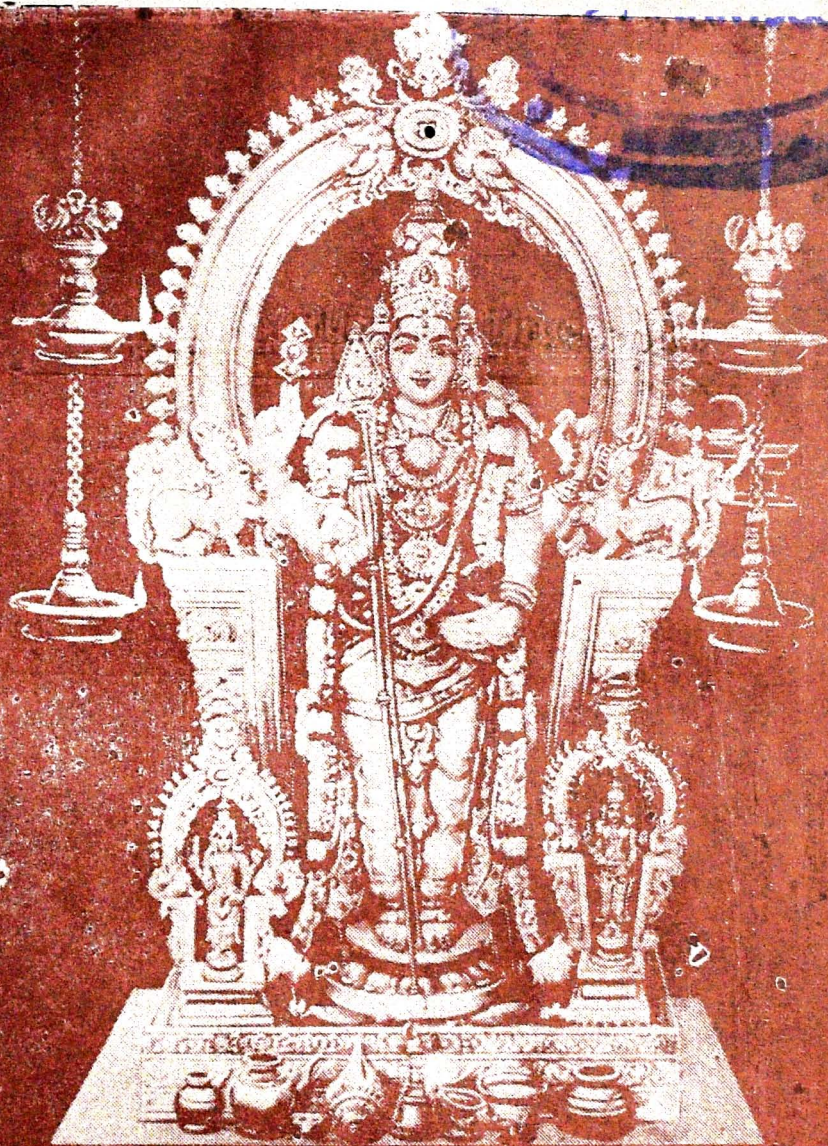
PRAYER TO SHANMUKHA



“ I bow down to [that Shanmukha,
(Six - faced God) who Shines with the
brilliance of myriads of Suns, who
is resplendent in his bejewelled
attire, who always fulfils the
wishes of his devotees, who is tranquil
and lovely like the autumnal moon”.

— Adi Sankara *





ஸ்ரீ சுப்பிரமணியசுவாமி ... SRI SUBRAMANIYA SWAMY

Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur



Lord Shanmuga with Valli And Deivanai

I. The Great God - Lord Muruga

The worship of the Supreme Being has been hailed as a great virtue. "Of what use is learning (to one), if the good feet of Him of Pure Knowledge are not worshipped?"¹ says the great, ancient, saintly Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar. So from time immemorial people worship God, Almighty in various forms and manners according to their experience and realisation. The worship of the great God Lord Muruga has been in practice in Tamil Nadu from very ancient period.

Lord Muruga is an omnipotent and omnipresent and omniscient God who showers blessings on the devotees who worship Him sincerely and surrender at his feet unhesitatingly. Eventhough all Muruga temples attract people in flocks, the sea-shore temple of Tiruchendur is growing in its importance and gaining wider name, fame and popularity in the modern period. In order to understand and appreciate the Tiruchendur temple, it is necessary to know more about Lord Muruga in general and Tiruchendur in particular.

God of Nature: Lord Muruga may be considered God of the Tamils. In spite of the fact that God may not be for a particular group, race or nation, the truth remains that the worship of Muruga was cultivated and developed in the southern part of India, Tamil Nadu.

In the pre historical period the ancient Tamil society grouped habitable land into five fold divisions

I. "கற்றதனா லாய பயனென்கொல் வாலறிவன்
நற்றூள் தொழார் எனின்" — திருக்குறள் — 2

namely *Kurinji* (hilly), *Mullai* (pastoral), *Neidal* (Coastal), *Marudam* (agricultural) and *Palai* (desert). This natural classification of land indicates the course of the development of human civilisation based on the flora and fauna of the region. People started their life by hunting in the hilly areas-(Kurinji), then led their life by rearing cattle in the pastures-Mullai, spread to coastal areas-Neidal-in search of new avenues of life, progressed further and took up cultivation in the plains-Marudam and ultimately extended their life to desert land-Palai. People who lived in the first four regions worshipped gods of different nature according to their situations and need. People who lived in Kurinji worshipped Murugan; the people of Mullai prayed to Mayon (Tirumal); the inhabitants of Neidal prayed to Varunan and the dwellers of Marudam had Vendan or Indra as their God.

As the hunter's life might have started in the hilly area Kurinji, Muruga could rightly be considered the first God of the Tamils. Dr. N. Subramanian observes, "The hunters of the hill tracts worshipped Murugan as the God of the hillock. The worship of Murugan was normally in the hands of the devotee priest, who also carried a spear or a *Vel* like Murugan Himself and so was called as *Velan*. The worship took the shape of a dance called '*Veriyattu* or *Veri Ayadal*.'" In course of Time the worship of Muruga spread to the other regions of Tamil Nadu and developed into a sophisticated religion.

As Muruga is the God of Kurinji, we can find His temples mostly on tops of hills. Out of the Six Great

2. 'Sangam Polity', Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966, p. 353

Bases of Lord Muruga five are situated in the hilly areas namely Tirupparangunram, Tiruvavinankudi (Palani), Tiruttani, Swamimalai and Alagarkoil (Pazhamuthircholai). Only the Tiruchendur temple is situated on the sea-shore. But it is said that the Tiruchendur temple is also on the red-stone rock, called 'Kanda-madana-parvatha'. The cliff can be seen near the Vishnu shrine inside.

Multitude of Names: Hinduism maintains that God has neither form nor formlessness; neither beginning nor end. God is a non - denominational absolute - the infinite. However, God is called by various names according to the whims and fancies of the devotees. This is true in the case of Lord Muruga also. His names are a legion. Some of them magnify His characteristics. Others identify Him pointing out His relationship with others or His peculiarity. Most of the names are in Tamil as He happens to be the ancient God of the Tamils.

According to Thiru. Vi. Kalyana Sundaranar, an eminent Tamil Scholar, the word 'Murugu' (முருகு) indicates many things. But this word as it is related to God, connotes four meanings 'Fragrance' (மணம்), 'Youth' (இளமை), 'Godliness' (கடவுட்டன்மை), and 'Beauty' (அழகு)³.

Lord Muruga is popularly known in the north as Skanda whose equivalent in Tamil is 'Kandan'⁴ which means one which is combined i. e. six bodies in one. It

³. 'முருகன் அல்லது அழகு', சிவகாமி அச்சகம், அண்ணாமலை நகர், பதினேராம் பதிப்பு, 1977, ப.9

⁴. 'திருச்செந்திலாதிபன்', வெளியீடு வி. முத்தையா செட்டியார், தேவகோட்டை, 1979, ப. 26

means also the hero who will weaken his enemy and conquer over him. The word 'kandu' (கந்து) in Tamil indicates the place where elephant is stalled. In this sense, Kandan is the mooring place for all souls.

According to the famous Skanda Purana, Muruga at the age of twelve, defeated the giant, Asura called Surapadma. So He is called by the name Kumaran which means eternal youth.

'Velavan' is another name which is given to Him because He holds the victorious lance-'Vel' in His hand. As His spear is just like a radiant light, He is called 'Kathirvelan'.

He is hailed as 'Sevarkodiyon' because His standard bears the cock emblem.

As He is associated with flower 'Kadambu'; consequently He is known as 'Kadamba'.

Another popular name of Lord Muruga is Subrahmanya who blesses the humanity.

He is also called Arumugam and Shanmugan to denote His six faces.

Puranas say that the power of Siva ('Siva-Viryam' known as 'tejas') was taken to the Ganges from the sacrificial fire. Then the Ganges bore it to the Saravana pond where He was nurtured by the six heavenly virgins Kartikai (Pleiades). Hence Muruga also bears the names of 'Gangaiyan', Saravanan and Kartikeyan.

As Senthil (Tiruchendur or Tirucheeralaivai = place of the beautiful waves), the site of fulfilment of a vow and Palani, the mount of meditation are among two famous places of His temples, He is called after those places 'Senthilandavan' and 'Palaniyandavan'.

As His complexion is red He is called 'Cheyon' (சேயோன்), and 'Cevvel' (செவ்வேள்) (God of Love). Since He is the darling spouse of Valli (one of His two wives,) He is known as Vallimanalan (Husband of Valli).

Legend has it that He taught the pranva mantra to His father Lord Siva. Therefore He has acquired the name of 'Swaminathan'.

There are also various other names with specific meaning by which his devotees call Him. Some of them are Guhan (Saviour), Guru (Teacher), Mayon Marugan (Son-in-law of Vishnu), Aramakan (Son of Siva), Devasenapathi (Chieftain of the God), Gnanapandithan (God of Pure Knowledge), Dhandayuthapani (one who keeps the weapon of dhandayutha) and Mayilvahanan (one who rides on peacock).

Appearance of Lord Muruga : Lord Muruga is worshipped in various beautiful forms such as Bala Muruga (Muruga as child), Shanmugar (Muruga with six faces), Devasenapathi (the Warlord), Swaminathan (seated in His father's lap, pouring into His ears the explication of the (mantra), Subrahmaniya with Valli and Deivanai (head of the family with two wives) and Palaniyandi (Sanyasin).

The six saintly faces of Shanmuga perform six special functions. According to the poet Saint Arunagiri each face is symbolic of a particular function. The first face spreads afar rays of light (of grace) destroying the darkness of ignorance. The second face which lightens up with gracious Love at the devotion of His beloved devotees, confers on them boons. The third face watches over the Sacrificial Yajna performed by His wise seers. The fourth face expounds the hidden meanings of the scriptures as the Supreme Teacher. The fifth face reveals His wrath to crush the pride of foes. The sixth face is full of joy at the sight of His pure hearted wife Valli.

Some people say⁵ that the six faces represent
 (i) Gnana (Wisdom-Pure Knowledge) (ஞானம்),
 (ii) Wealth (திரு), (iii) Divine Power (ஐசுவரியம்)
 (iv) Strength (வீரியம்), (v) Dispassion (வைராக்கியம்) and
 (vi) Fame (புகழ்).

In whatever form and figure Lord Muruga is represented, the form no doubt reveals that "Muruga is Strength; He is Love and wisdom and showers Grace. He is Bliss, He is at once divine and human in His Beauty".⁶

Arumugam (Shanmugam) has twelve arms. In His five right arms He holds the lance (வேல்), arrow (அம்பு), sword (வாள்), wheel (திகிரி), and rope (பாசம்) respectively and the sixth right arm shows the 'abhaya pose'.

⁵. புலவர் செந்துறை முத்து, 'திருக்கோயில் தத்துவம்,'
 ஸ்ரீ இந்து பப்ளிகேஷன், சென்னை 1978, ப. 74

⁶. Ratna Navaratnam, 'Karttikeya-The Divine Child',
 Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay-7, 1973, p. 52

In his left arms He possesses Vajra (வச்சிரம்) bow (வில்), bright shield (கேடயம்), cock banner (சேவற்கொடி), hook (அங்குசம் and Varadha (வரதம்).

Valli is seated on the right side and Deivanai on the left side. The lance of lord Muruga represents Gnana Sakthi, Power of pure Knowledge. While Valli is the symbol of Iccha Sakthi (Power of Desire), Deivanai stands for Giriya Sakthi, (Power of Action).

Lord Muruga is seen on seat of eternal grace-the peacock. It is also the symbol of 'Om'.

On the whole the figure of Lord Muruga with the various symbols is the material form of a high spiritual philosophy.

Worship of Muruga : The worship of Lord Muruga has continued in Tamil Nadu for the past 3000 years. He is considered to be the God of Kaliyuga. So He is given the name of Kaliyuga Varadan.

The early Tamil poet who has sung poems in praise of Muruga is Nakkirar. He wrote his immortal poem, Tirumurugarrupadai (திருமுருகாற்றுப்படை) as early as the third century B. C. He calls Muruga Cevvel (செவ்வேள்), God of Love and Seyon (சேயோன்), God of valour. Reference to Muruga can be found in various Tamil literary works such as Kalitokai, Kurinchi, Tolkappiam, Ahananuru, Silappadikaram and Kandar Anubhuthi of Arunagiri Nathar.

Eventhough God Muruga is the special deity of the Tamils, His worship is not confined to Tamil Nadu only.

Evidences are there to prove that the worship of God Muruga as God of war has been practised throughout India and Sri Lanka from ancient time immemorial. Ratna Navaratnam observes, "Puranas record the legends - legends praising holy places, temples and thirthams, and explain the images; whereas treatises like the Silpasastras, Kriyapaada of the Agamas and Tantras like Kumaratantra give the rules to build temples and to make the images and conduct pujas".⁷

The worship of God Muruga as a Giver of boons and virtuous life continues and has gained momentum at present. We can find Lord Muruga's temples not only in Tamil Nadu but also in foreign countries such as Sri Lanka (Kathirkamam temple) and Malasiya.

Tiruchendur, one of the six ancient abodes of Lord Muruga, is gaining popularity and devotees are coming in large number to worship Him and to receive benediction. Therefore considerable significance is attached to the temple of Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur.



⁷. Ibid p 21

2. Significance of the Tiruchendur Temple

Tiruchendur enriched by the endless tidal tribute of the sea, stands peerless as a pilgrim centre. "Tiruchendur enjoys immense popularity among all classes of worshippers of Muruga as a shrine dedicated to the elements of water, and where Muruga devotees are assured of victory in their undertakings",¹ observes Ratna Navaratnam.

In order of significance Tiruchendur occupies the second place among the 'Six Great Bases' of Lord Muruga as narrated by poet Nakkirar. As Senthil Thuravi points out, "In this order, Tiruchendur (Jayanthipuri) forms the root in the worship of Lord Muruga (Kartikeya). Lord's very Avatar (incarnation) had to come to Tiruchendur for killing the demon Soorapadma".³ So it may be rightly described as the 'Abode of Fulfilment, of an unflinching resolve.

Tiruchendur attracts devotees owing to its unique features. While all other five important temples are situated on hill tops, it is the only temple on the sea-shore.

1. 'Karttikeya'- 'The Divine Child', P. 50

2. More details about this can be found in a later chapter.

3. 'Two Shore Temples', Sasthan Publication, Tiruchendur, P.8

The temple stands aloft on a hillock sunk under the mound. The singing, dancing and foaming waves of the gulf of Mannar and the beautiful white sand dunes surround three sides of the temple and create wonderful atmosphere which provides full peace of mind to the devotees.

Significance of Tiruchendur : Tiruchendur literally means in Tamil a beautiful and prosperous village of victory. "This place has been known variously as Tirucheeralaivai, Tiruch-chendhil and Tiruch-chendiloor in the Tamil classics; Cheyandhipuram and Sindhupuram in Sanskrit texts, Tiri-bhuvana - madhevi Chadurvedhi-mangalam in the later Pandya Inscriptions, and Tiruchendur from the 16th century as popularly mentioned by Saint Arunagiri in Tirup-pugazh."⁴

Every name of the place signifies a distinct meaning to indicate the speciality of this temple centre. Thiru - cheeralaivai means the place of beautiful waves which sing the fame of the Creator. Tiruch-chendil is the beautiful house of God where the devotees can attain maturity and mellowness in the process of self-realisation.

This place is known as Jayanthipuram or Jayantha Nagaram because Muruga has emerged victorious, vanquishing Surapadma in this place. It also goes by the name of Veerabagupattinam after the name of Lord Muruga's chieftain, Veerabahu.

⁴. J. M. Somasundaram, B.A., B.L., 'Tiruchendur The Sea - Shore Temple of Subrahmanyam', Tiruvavaduthurai Mutt, 1948, P.5

Grandeur of Tiruchendur as depicted by Poets : Many great Tamil poets have wondered and praised Tiruchendur from very early period. Tolkkappiam, the most ancient Sangam work, glorifies Muruga as 'Ceyon', the red God seated on the blue peacock. It speaks of Tiruchendur, as the "shore of the holy sea of Muruga".⁵ Purananuru says that "the foaming while-crested waves shake the place Senthil".⁶

There is a reference in Ahananuru to Tiruchendur as place of holy lustre where the beautiful light waves mingle in the grandeur of god.⁷

Nakkirar, the first critic of even God Siva, in his renowned work 'Thirumurugarrupadai' extols Tiruchendur as the abode of universal renown adorned by high and ever rising waves of glory.⁸

Ilangovadigal, author of Silappadigaram, the great Tamil epic, refers to this place as magnificent Senthil.⁹

In the later period Saint Arunagirinathar garlands Lord Muruga with his enchanting and absorbing poem Tiruppugazh. Scores of other poets have lost themselves in their adoration of Lord Muruga.

5. "முருகன் தீம்புனல் அலைவாய்" — களவு, சூத். 28
6. "வெண்டலைப் புணரியலைக்குஞ் செந்தில்" — புறநானூறு 55
7. "திருமணி விளக்கினலை வாய்ச்செரு மிகுசே எய்" — அகநானூறு 266
8. "உலகம் புகழ்ந்த ஒங்குயர் விழுச்சீர் அலைவாய்" — திருமுருகாற்றுப்படை
9. "சீர்கெழு செந்திலும் செங்கோடும் வெண்குன்றும்" — சிலப்பதிகாரம் (குன்றக்குரவை)

In modern period Saint Ramalingar, who had the vision of Lord Muruga in a mirror, has poured out melodious strains in his Tiruyarutpa revealing his infinite faith in Senthil Muruga. The great national poet, Subramania Bharathi has composed beautiful poems on Muruga.

Greatness of Tiruchendur Lord Muruga: The wonderful power wielded by Senthil Muruga has been demonstrated on many occasions. There are incidents of His greatness which attracts people of different sections in large number.

Sri Sankaracharya (Adi Sankarar), the founder of the Advaita philosophy (Non-dualistic) of the Hindu philosophy, was affected by chronic illness. When his suffering became acute he writhed in pain without knowing the way to cure it. He was called by God Muruga and directed to sing His fame. Sri Sankara paid a visit to Tiruchendur, worshipped Lord Muruga singing his famous hymn 'Subrahmanya Bhujangam, and got himself restored to health.

Sri Kumaraguruparar was born mute at Srivaikuntam which is 34 K. M. away from Tiruchendur. His parents were faithful devotees of God Muruga. When Kumara-guruparar became 5 years old, his parents took him to Tiruchendur temple and stayed there with him for 45 days and performed penance with continuous prayer. To the surprise of all, Kumaraguruparar, who could not speak a single word till that time, got the blessings of Muruga in his dream and sang the wonderful poem, called Kandar

Kali Venba, praising Tiruchendur Muruga and revealing his unique spiritual experience.

There is another incident which shows how the people of other sects of Hinduism also are attracted by the greatness of Tiruchendur Muruga. One Tamil poet by name Pakalikkuthar was a Vaishnavite. He was the ardent devotee of Vishnu. It was his wont to refuse to sing songs on Lord Muruga. Once he was affected by illness and his sufferings knew no bounds. He realised by intuition his mistake of not singing about Lord Muruga. Then he rendered his famous and beautiful 'Tiruchendur Pillai Tamil' which deems Lord Muruga as a child and reveals the devotion of the poet. The power of the poet's hymn moved the Lord whose indulgent grace cured Pakalikkuthar of his illness.

Another incident which has been substantiated by the historical writings also reveals the omnipotence of Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur. About 1648 A. D. a group of sea men, later identified as the Dutch, came to Tiruchendur in a ship to plunder the temple. After carrying the valuables of the Siva temple which is in the heart of Tiruchendur, they entered the sea-shore temple of Lord Muruga. They found there the idol Shanmuga. They thought that the idol was made of gold. So they carried it away. When the ship was sailing a violent storm broke and sea became turbulent. According to the instructions of the captain of the ship, the Dutch pirates bound the two idols i. e. the Natrajar idols which they took from Tirunallaru and the Shanmugar idol which they took from Tiruchendur with ropes and cast them into the sea as anchors to protect the ship from its perilous end. When the storm abated, they tried to heave the idols. But it was not

possible for them to draw the idols. So they had to cut the ropes and leave the idols in order to save their ship.

In the next morning the priests and devotees of the temple found to their dismay the idol missing. They went to Tirunelveli and reported the matter to Vadamalaiyappa Pillaiyyan who was at the time the local administrator of the Nayakkar ruler. He was a great devotee of Lord Muruga. Brought to his wits end he was very much worried. According to the advice of his mother, he arranged to make a duplicate idol in panchaloka. When the duplicate idol was carried to Tiruchendur, Vadamalaiyappan halted on the way with his men to have some rest.

At that time Vadamalaiyappa Pillaiyyan had a dream in which he came to know that the idol could be found in a particular spot of the sea. He had foreknowledge that lime fruit would be floating and a Vishnu kite hovering above to mark the place. Then Vadamaliyappan went to sea with sufficient number of people and recovered the original Shanmugar idol along with the Natarajar idol. It is said that he reinstalled them in the temple in the year 1653. The duplicate idol was installed in the Tiruppirantheeswar temple which is situated east of Palayamkottai. Vadamalaiyappa Pillaiyyan had also erected a Mandapa at Tiruchendur as a monument of Lord Muruga's grace which he had and enjoyed.

There are many incidents narrated by the local people to bring out the greatness of Tiruchendur Muruga. Very recently a seven year old daughter of Thiru K. S. D. Murthi, Auditor of Tirunelveli, who was dumb, got the blessings of Lord Muruga and was able to speak

at Tiruchendur. A young man, belonging to Chettiar Community of Aruppukkottai, whose legs and hands were not in good condition was cured by worship in this temple. He was able to walk like other men with his legs and work with his hands. Another person of Karaikudi met with a car accident and got his legs crushed. The doctors were not able to cure him. He was completely cured by his constant prayer to Tiruchendur Muruga and was able to walk in the Kandar Sasti festival of 1966.

People of other religion also often came to Lord Muruga. One of such incidents may be cited. One Muslim poet by name Meerakkannu lived in Kalan-Kudiyiruppu at Udangudi which is near Tiruchendur. He had borrowed money for his family expenses. Since he was not able to repay the loan, he was threatened by imminent arrest for his default. He prayed to Lord Muruga composing and singing poems. In his dream, he was directed to go to Tiruchendur. In the meantime, Kulasai Senthilkatha Muppanar, who was the Trustee of the temple also had a dream in which he was instructed to give money to the Muslim poet by taking from the Shanmuga Vilas Hundi. When the Trustee opened the Hundi, he and the poet found to their surprise that there was exactly the same amount which the poet had to repay by way of loan.

Those people who come in complete faith in Lord Muruga find that their wishes are fulfilled by him in a wonderful way which defies logical explanation.

Presiding Deities of the Temple : When we enter the temple through the main entrance, first we see Lord

Shanmuga with His two consorts-Valli and Deivanai in a magnificent standing posture. As the deity is facing south, He could be seen and worshipped by the devotees even standing at the grand Shanmuga Vilasa with its four 5 foot high pillars constructed in front of the temple on a grand scale.

Lord Shanmuga and His consorts are in a distinct temple with Vimana. It is told that this shrine might have been a later addition to the original sanctums. J. M. Somasundaram observes, "Tiruchendur is even more intensively associated with the Shanmukha's sanctum. Shanmukha is the Bhaktas' idol, the cynosure of all eyes and the chief attraction of the commonality". He is being taken with impressive decoration on the seventh and eighth days of the Masi and Avani festivals.

The principal deity of this great sea-shore temple is Subramanya, popularly known as Senthil Andavar. He is in a standing posture to grace the devotees who come from various places seeking His blessing. As He is facing east, one can see Him only when one goes inside the temple.

According to the Hindu mythology, Subrahmanya prayed to Lord Siva through His penance before He waged war against Surapadma, the Asura. So in the principal sanctum, there is the Sivalinga Jaganath to the left of Subrahmanya. Daily poojas are performed to Sivalinga. Mythology tells us that original nucleus of this great temple was constructed by Mayon, the architect of heaven. Subrahmanya worshipped this Sivalinga.

The sanctum of Lord Subrahmanya is being guarded by Veerabahu and Veera-mahendra standing to His left and right respectively. We can see and pray Gnana Nayaka, Ganesan and the divine Mother, Parvathi who are installed on the left side of the principal sanctum.

Place of Victory : It is a rare experience to worship Shanmuga and Subrahmanya in this ancient temple. Anyone will find that all his oppressing worries are taken off himself at the sight of Senthil Muruga. He will get fresh strength and confidence to carry on his activities. As this is the place where Lord Muruga got victory over Surapadma, one can be sure of getting victory in all his endeavours.

Devotees are coming from all over India as well as from certain foreign countries such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia. It will be a grand sight to look at people coming in crowds with '*palgudam*' (milk pot) and *Kavadi* to offer to Lord Subrahmanya. Both the literate and the illiterate find peace of mind at Tiruchendur.



3. Historical Background And Description Of The Temple

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says, "It is essential to every religion that its heritage should be treated as sacred. A society which puts a halo of sanctity round its tradition gains an inestimable advantage of power and permanence".¹ As the temples are the sheet-anchors which preserve our heritage and tradition, a study of their history is quite rewarding to us.

Nucleus of the Temple : It is very difficult to date the origin of the temple. Skanda Purana tells that Lord Muruga encamped at Tiruchendur before He waged war against the Asuras. At that time Muruga wanted to worship Siva. So Mayan, the architect of the Heaven, built a shrine of Siva on the sea-shore. It is said that this shrine formed the nucleus of the temple for Lord Muruga.

There is a version that the original temple might have been the Siva temple which is situated in the heart of Tiruchendur town. Worship of Sri Sivakolendeeswarar and Sri Anandavalli Amman goes on in this temple. A separate temple for Lord Muruga might have been

1. 'The Hindu View of Life', George Allen and Unwin, Bombay, 1964, P. 15.

constructed after the seventh or the eighth century. But there is no recorded evidence for this conjecture. Anyhow, from the references which we find in the Tamil classics like *Purananuru* and *Ahananuru*, we may say that nucleus of this temple should have been here for more than 2000 years.

Adi Sankarar might have come to this temple during the eighth century A. D. The original temple might have been a small shrine which might have been expanded in course of time.

Patronage of the Pandya Kings: From the inscriptions found in this temple, it is ascertained that this temple had received royal patronage from the Pandya kings namely Varaguna Maran (875 A.D.), Pandya Mara Varman (1282 A.D.) and Vikrama Pandya Deva. They had given gold coins and donated land to the temple with a view to conducting poojas in the temple.

Nayakkar rule and the Temple: During the seventeenth century when the Nayakkars were ruling this part of Tamil Nadu, they had extended royal patronage to this temple. It has already been pointed out earlier that Vadamalaiyappa Pillaiyan was at Tirunelveli to collect rent for the Nayakkar ruler. When the idol of Shanmuga had been taken by the Dutch in 1648 A.D., and left in the sea, it was he who recovered it from the sea as per the direction of Lord Muruga and re-installed it in 1653 A.D., with another idol of Natarajar discovered from the same spot. He constructed a mandapa at Tiruchendur and also set up

an endowment - a *kattalai* - for Muruga. Lord Muruga visits this mandapa on the 7th day of the Masi and Avani festivals.

Vadamalaiyappa Pillaiyan was a great devotee of Muruga. An incident, locally narrated, reveals the power of Lord Muruga and the devotion of Vadamalaiyappan. It is believed to have happened during the reign of the celebrated poligar of Panchalankurichi - Kattabomman. This chieftain, who first raised the voice against the British rule was also a great devotee of Muruga. He had constructed a mandapa at Tiruchendur. Once he wanted to take the Lord to his mandapa instead of Vadamalaiyappan's mandapa. Vadamalaiyappan was not able to resist the fierce poligar. But when the Lord was taken in procession, there arose cyclonic wind which swept off the bearers of the palanquin against their will. At the end they were with the Lord in Vadamalaiyappan's mandapa. It is thus that Kattabomman came to realise the intensity of the devotion of Vadamalaiyappan Pillaiyan and became his friend. Vadamalaiyappan did a lot for the development of this temple.

Kattabomman's Devotion : The father of the powerful poligar, Veerapandia Kattabomman was Jagaveera Kattabomman.² He was a great devotee of Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur. He used to have his lunch only after the mid-day pooja was performed in the temple. Since

². க. பொ. சுந்தரவடிவேலனார், “அருட்குமரனின் ஆறு படை வீடுகள்”, பைலட் பப்ளிகேஷன்ஸ், சென்னை, 1978, ப.58.

he was at Panchalankurichi which is 80 K. M. away from Tiruchendur, he had made special arrangements to know the performance of the mid-day pooja. He had constructed mandapas at different spots covering the whole distance of 80 K. M. In every mandapa he posted a drummer. On hearing the pealing of the bell of the temple when the pooja was conducted at Tiruchendur, the drum beaters in the mandapas used to beat the drum and transmit the news of the pooja to the poligar of Panchalankurichi by beating the drums. Jegaveerapandia Kattabomman would break his fast and have his meals only after hearing the reverberating drum. Even now we can see the remnants of such mandapas between Panchalankurichi and Tiruchendur.

It is said that once Jegaveera Kattabomman came with his wife to Tiruchendur temple and gave all the ornaments worn by his wife to the temple as a token of his devotion. His wife wanted to retain one beautiful diamond necklace for her. So she gave all the ornaments except that.

In the night Jegaveera Pandiya Kattabomman had dream. Lord Muruga appeared in his dream and told him that His darling Valli wanted to have a necklace and as he was a sanyasin, He was not able to procure one. Then Jegaveera Kattabomman realised that this dream was due to the retention of the necklace by his wife. Then next day he and his wife offered the necklace to Lord Muruga.

Veerapandia Kattabomman also had immense devotion for Senthilandavan. The idols of Muruga which he worshipped are kept now at the entrance of the temple. Like his father he also gave liberal gifts to this temple.

Travancore King and Tiruchendur Temple: This temple had the patronage of the Travancore king, Maharaja Marthanda Varma who ruled Kerala from 1729 to 1758 A.D. He had instituted the *Udayamarthanda Kattalai* which still continues.

The worship in the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Subrahmanya is conducted by *poiris* from Kerala. The system of worship by *poiris* is said to have been introduced by Udayamarthanda Varma.

It is the only temple in Tamil Nadu (except temples of Kanyakumari district which were till recently with Kerala) where the devotees have to remove their shirts before they enter the temple. This is a typical custom prevailing in Kerala. From this we can understand the influence wielded by the Travancore King in this temple.

Construction and Renovation of the temple by the Sanyasins : More or less all the great temples of Tamil Nadu were designed and constructed by the kings or with royal patronage. The only exception is Tiruchendur temple which was constructed in its present complete form and renovated only by the efforts and ceaseless endeavour of the sanyasins of the 17th, 18th and 19th century A. D.

4. Skanda Purana And Tiruchendur

Skanda Purana is one of the eighteen Maha-Puranas¹ of Hinduism. It deals with the birth and activities of Skanda or Lord Subrahmanya, the Hindu God of war.

Predominance of evil forces : Once evil forces were predominant in all the three worlds in the forms of Surapadman and his brothers Singamugan and Tarakan. Surapadman was the son of Mayai and Kasyapar. As per the advice of his mother, he undertook a big sacrifice at Uttara Guru to amass riches and power to oust the Devas. He threw himself into the sacrificial fire as the offering to the gods. At the end, he was restored to life and endowed with the boon to wield sovereign sway over all beings in the universe. His powerful Guru Sukracharya also made him an arrogant king. He overpowered all the Devas (gods) and drove them away from Heaven.

The Birth of Subrahmanya : The vanquished Devas went to Brahma who directed them to Siva who was at that time in *yoga samathi*. Brahma told them to persuade Kamadeva to tempt Siva and make Him beget a son who would destroy Surapadman. When Kama Deva disturbed

-
1. The eighteen Maha-Puranas are (1) Brahma, (2) Padma, (3) Vishnu, (4) Vayu, (5) Sri Bhagavata, (6) Naradiya, (7) Markandeya, (8) Agni, (9) Bhavishya, (10) Brahmavaivarta, (11) Varaha, (12) Linga, (13) Skanda, (14) Vanama, (15) Kurma, (16) Matsya, (17) Garuda, (18) Brahmanda.

Siva from His yoga samathi by shooting his floral shafts of love, Siva opened His third eye with anger and destroyed Kama Deva. But Siva realised through His yogic vision the need of the birth of Subrahmanya to destroy the powerful Asuras.

At that time, sparks of light came from the third eye of Siva. According to the orders of Siva, Vayu Deva and Agni Deva carried the sparks and threw them into the Ganges. The Ganges took them to the Himalayan lake, called Saravana Poigai. The divine sparks took the form of six divine babies who were nurtured by the six karthikai maidens.

When Parvathi Devi, the divine mother, saw the six babies crying in the Saravana Poigai, she took all of them and embraced them. The six babies became one known as Kanda. Sakthi, mother Parvathi, fed Him with her milk. Hence Kanda or Shanmuga has one body, six faces and twelve arms.

Karttikeya did many *leelas* as a child at Kailas. When time came, Siva bade His son Muruga to save Devas from the tyranny of the Asuras and redeem them. Muruga was provided with invincible power and the necessary valiant army of Boothas and Ganas. The nine Sakthis, headed by Veerabahu, who were born from the anklets of Parvathi were at the command of Muruga. His mother, Uma Devi, gave Him the powerful lance, *Sakthi Vel*.

Tiruchendur Camp of Muruga: Lord Subrahmanya came with His army from Kailas to fulfil his mission. He reached Tiruchendur passing through Tirukedar, Benares, Kalahasthi, Tiruvenkadam, Chidambaram and Tirupparankunram. Tiruchendur became the camp of

Muruga. He made the necessary preparations to stage war against Surapadman. He prayed to God Siva in the shrine, specially constructed for Him by the heavenly architect, Mayan.

Lord Muruga first sent His chieftain Veerabahu to Veeramahendram, the capital city of Surapadman on a goodwill mission, giving him a chance to release the Devas and surrender. But Surapadman humiliated Veerabahu and refused to release the Devas.

War Between Good and Evil: There was a marathon war between the forces of Muruga and Surapadman. They fought vigorously at all the levels and region i. e. in the air, nether regions, mid regions of the Universe, at sea and fire. Surapadman's brothers, sons and his gigantic hosts ceaselessly opposed him for five days. In the war, most of them were destroyed. Surapadman alone survived at the end.

Subrahmanya thought of putting an end to war. He gave one more chance to Surapadman by showing his *Visvaroopadharsan*. Surapadman realised that he was fighting with God Himself. As his pride was dominant, he refused to surrender and continued his fight.

Place of Fulfilment : Then Subrahmanya rode on His peacock which was Indra, took His lance and began His war. Surapadman employed all his tactics in fighting against Lord Subrahmanya. First he took the form of a frightful and enchanted mango tree and came to attack Muruga. Lord Muruga sent His lance which pierced the mango tree and broke it into two. Surapadman, who was in the form of two broken pieces, transformed into a mighty pea-fowl and canticleer. The

pea-fowl and the canticler began to attack Muruga. In no time Subrahmanya defeated Surapadman. In the end Lord Subrahmanya forgave him.

In order to fulfil the wishes of Surapadman, Lord Muruga took peacock as His permanent vehicle and the canticler as his banner. This act implies that Lord Muruga will destroy only the sin but not the sinners. At the same time out of His infinite grace He forgives the sinners.

Lord Muruga fulfilled His mission at Tiruchendur by liberating the Devas from the oppression of the Asuras. From that time onwards Tiruchendur became Jayantipuram, the place of Victory.

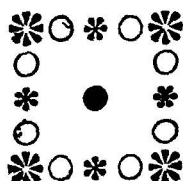
Marriage with Deivanai and Valli : When Indra was very much pleased with the victory of Lord Muruga, he gave his beloved daughter Deivanai in marriage to Him. Deivanai stands as a symbol of Kriya Sakthi i. e. the motive force of action.

Sundari, daughter of Tirumal, yearned to marry Lord Muruga. She was born as a child of a deer at *Vallimalai* (Hill of Valli) which was ruled over by Nambi, king of the hunters. Nambi found the child in the hill and named her Valli. Valli grew up as a beautiful young woman. According to the custom of the tribe, she went to the forest to guard the fields of millet. Narada told Lord Muruga about the beauty of Valli. Muruga came to Vallimalai as a hunter with a bow and arrow and courted her. At the end He married Valli who is the Iccha Sakthi i. e. the energy of desire.

The Great Skanda Sashti Festival : In order to commemorate the victory of Lord Muruga over Surapadman, Skanda Sashti Festival is celebrated every year during the month of *Aippasi* i. e. in October—November. During this period, the devotees come to the temple, stay there for six days and undertake severe penance. As Lord Muruga's victory over Surapadman, Singa Mugan and Tharakan indicates the victory over three evil forces in man namely *Anava*, *Maya* and *Kanma*, the devotees are expected to overcome the evil forces by their penance of six days which corresponds to the six day war of Lord Muruga.

The Skanda Sashti festival celebrated on the sea-shore on the evening of the sixth day is a spectacular event. Lord Muruga's fight with Surapadman who assumed various forms is being colourfully presented. People come in large numbers to have a *dharsan* of this festival, called *Sura Samhara*.

On the next day there will be Tirukkalyanam festival. The marriage between Lord Muruga and Deivanai is being celebrated on a grand scale.



5. Poojas And Festivals of Lord Muruga Of Tiruchendur

Temples are the spiritual centres which provide holy atmosphere to worship God. When we enter the temples, we forget our earthly worries and the thought of God transports us to the higher regions of spiritual delight. We collectively pray to God in the temple oblivious of our social differences.

There are various methods of worshipping God. Performing pooja is a method which enables us to concentrate our thought. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi observes, "Ritual and the dogmatic aspects of religion are certainly necessary, because for the soul to exist so must the body. Their value is that they constitute the body of religion for the purpose of providing an opportunity for the spirit of religion to guide the destiny of the people".¹

Witnessing and worshipping at the time of poojas in the Tiruchendur temple is a great experience for the devotees. The pooja times are the moments when the devotees pine away in meditation and identify themselves with Lord Muruga.* Devotees utter the various names of Lord Muruga at the time of pooja and are enraptured by the grace of God.

1. 'The Science of Being and Art of Living', International SRM Publications, London, 1963, P. 256

Speciality of Poojas at Tiruchendur : Major Poojas are performed nine times a day at the Tiruchendur temple. It is the custom in most of the temples to conduct poojas six times a day. The following is the list of the timings and the names of the daily poojas performed at the sanctum sanctorum :—

- (i) 5-30 to 5-45 A.M. Viswaroopam
- (ii) 6-00 to 6-30 A.M. Udayamarthandam
- (iii) 8-00 to 8-45 A.M. Mudal-Kalasandhi
- (iv) 8-00 to 8-45 A.M. Siru-Kalasandhi
- (v) 8-00 to 8-45 A.M. Peria-Kalasandhi
- (vi) 12-30 to 1-00 P.M. Utchi-Kalam (Mid-day)
- (vii) 5-00 to 6-00 P.M. Sayaratchai (Evening)
- (viii) 9-15 to 9-30 P.M. Ardhamam (Night)
- (ix) 9-45 to 10-00 P.M. Ekandham

Poojas are performed by *portis* in the Kerala tradition. However, Tamil method is also followed. So we can find a synthesis of the Kerala and Tamil traditions in this temple. In the sanctum of Lord Subrahmanya *portis* are doing poojas according to '*Thandra Samuchiam*' (தந்திர சமுச்சயம்). In the shrine of Lord Shanmuga *pattars* are conducting poojas according to '*Kumara Thandra*' (குமார தந்திரம்).

A Typical Day in the Temple : The doors of the temple at Tiruchendur open at the pre-dawn hour of 5-00 A.M. Devotees enter the temple after their bath in the sea and the Nazhikkinaru. There is a belief that the twenty four places of holy dip (Tirthas) have their confluence in Tiruchendur.

The worship starts at the Valliyamman shrine where Lord Muruga stays at night. They sing songs (திருப்பள்ளி எழுச்சி) to wake Muruga. From there He goes to the sanctum of Shanmuga. After pooja *Viswaroopa* darshan follows. It is a grand sight of Lord Muruga, fully adorned, to grace the devotees. When the rituals are undertaken one by one, the devotee forgets himself in the presence of Lord Muruga whose image shines amidst the circling lights of camphor during *deeparthanai*. Then pooja is performed to Lord Shanmuga.

Every pooja is carried out at the stipulated time. In addition to them devotees are offering *archanais* which are countless. Worshipping devotees keep on coming and going till 1-00 P. M.

After the interval in the noon, the temple opens in the evening at 4 O'clock. Once again devotees surge in crowds to worship Lord Muruga.

At 9-45 P. M. there is secret pooja performed behind the curtain. It is not meant for devotees. The belief is that Lord Subrahmanya is giving his power to Lord Shanmuga who is the *utchava murthi* (உற்சவ மூர்த்தி) or professional deity of this temple. The 'padhas' (sacred feet) of Lord Shanmuga go to Valli's shrine (the Lord's bed chamber) for rest. The final pooja is performed at the temple of Valli where Lord Muruga is believed to sleep in the night.

Sacred Ash in the 'Panneer' (பன்னீர்) Leaf : Another speciality of this temple is that the sacred ash (திருநீர்) folded in panneer leaf is given to the devotees. Tradition has it that the great Vedas stand in the form of Panneer trees in this divine land.

The following points about the greatness of panneer leaf are noteworthy.² (i) Sacred ash folded in panneer leaf is given in the Thiruvavaduthurai and Thiruppananthalmutts by their heads. (ii) The panneer flower possesses certain special qualities which are found in the leaf as well. (iii) This is as suitable as 'Thulasi' (துளசி) for Siva Pooja.* (iv) There are twelve nerves in the panneer leaf as if they resemble the twelve arms of Lord Muruga. (v) It preserves the sacred ash for a longer period. (vi) It has medicinal properties. So devotees used to eat it. (vii) It is associated with Tiruchendur from very early times. (viii) It becomes handy to distribute *prasada* to the devotees. (ix) Since Vedas stand as panneer trees, the leaf has the power of Veda.

Sandal is also given with sacred ash in this temple.

Importance of Festivals : In addition to daily poojas, seasonal and annual festivals are conducted at Tiruchendur temple. It is pointed out, "While the temples of South India are the repositories of ancient Hindu culture and reflect religious tradition, the festivals conducted therein are intended not only to evoke piety but also provide an opportunity to the people from all strata to mingle freely with one another and breathe the air of divinity together... The festivals also serve as a

² . 'திருச்செந்தூர் தலபுராணம்', தொகுப்பாசிரியர் , திரு T. S. கணபதி சாஸ்திரிகள், 1976, ப 62—63.

*. However, 'thulasi' is chiefly associated with the worship of Thirumal.

feast for the eyes for those who do not visit the shrines- as the idols are brought out decorated and taken in procession".³

All days, especially Fridays and Kirithikai days look like festival days. Still special festivals are conducted at fixed periods. We may narrate briefly the annual festivals carried out in this temple.

The Masi Festival : One of the colourful festivals is the Masi (Bramotsavam) festival conducted during the months of February-March. This is a twelve day festival. The seventh and eighth days are more important because Lord Shanmuga is taken away from the sanctum in the temple and brought in procession to the town. On the eighth day Lord shanmuga comes in his superb form with green floral decoration all over his person, called *pachchai-Sathuppadi*.

The temple cars are drawn by the public on the 10th day. The eleventh day witnesses the Theppam float. (தெப்பத் திருவிழா). It is a splendid sight to see the illuminated float moving around majestically in the tank.

The Avani Festival : Another festival, called Avani Festival, is celebrated during August-September in the same way as the Masi festival for twelve days. The seventh and eighth days are important and attractive since Lord Shanmuga is brought from the sanctum. This festival also ends with the Theppam float.

³ Article, 'Deity on the Decorated Float', written by Staff Reporter, published in "The Hindu", dated Feb. 10, 1980.

As Masi and Avani festivals are celebrated for 12 days, devotees are able to come and participate in these festivals according to their convenience.

The Vasantha Festival: Another annual festival is the Vasantha festival conducted during the month of Chitrai (April-May). This is celebrated for 10 days. During this festival, Sendhil-Nayagar, the processional deity of Subrahmanya comes with Valli and Deivanai to the Vasantha mandapa. It is a delightful sight to see *Uthava murthi* in the decorated form. It is mostly a local festival which is not attended by a large crowds of people from outside as in other festivals.

The Visakam Festival : The VaiKasi Visakam Festival (May-June) is the most important festival of Tiruchendur which is attended by large crowds. Though this too is a twelve day festival, only the last two days are more important.

Devotees come to this festival with countless *Kavadis* and *paludams*. we can witness the deep bhakti of the village people who come from far-away places.

The Skanda Sashti Festival : The festival mostly associated with Tiruchendur is the Skanda Sashti festival. It is celebrated in the months of October and November. As it is narrated already, it is celebrated to commemorate the victory of Lord Muruga over Surapadma.

The importance of this festival is the fasting of the devotees for six days. According to Saint Ramalingar, one should 'Be Fasting' (பசித்திரு) 'Be alone' (தனித்திரு) and 'Be Awakened' (விழித்திரு) to realise God. In a way the Skanda Sashti festival provides opportunity for the

devotees to purify themselves by performing this fasting.

Cultural Importance : The festivals are important means of cultural development. The temple authorities organise divine discourses, good musical performances and popular entertainments.

More than this, many articles are sold during the festivals. So people come to these festivals in addition to worshipping Lord Muruga, they come in to contact with many people and grow into culturally more developed persons.



6. The Six Great Bases Of Lord Muruga

There are many temples for Lord Muruga. But, out of these innumerable temples six temples are considered to be the six 'Great Bases' (ஆறுபடை வீடுகள்) of Lord Muruga.

The great Sangam Tamil poet, Nakkirar in his renowned classic, 'Tirumurugarrupadai', names these six centres in the order of Tirupparankunram, Tirucheeralaivai (Tiruchendur), Tiruvavinankudi (Palani), Tiruverakam (Swamimalai), Kunruthoradal (Tiruttanikai), and Pazhamuthircholai (Alagarkoil).

In one way number 'six' is associated with Muruga in many ways. Lord Muruga has six faces. His mantra

word is 'Sa Ra Va Na Ba Va' (சரவணபவ) which is a six letter word. During the Skanda Sasti devotees used to fast for six days. Naturally six of His centres have attained more popularity. As every one of these six great temples possesses some speciality, we may briefly narrate each one of them.

(I) **Tirupparankunram** : The first of the six great bases of Lord Muruga is situated in the south-west of Madurai, about 6 K.M. away from it. This hilly place is also known as Tirupparangiri, Kandamatanam, Kandamalai, Satyagiri and Parankunram. This place is one thousand and fifty feet above sea level. This mountain looks like Sivalinga. On the top of this hill the Muslims have erected a mosque for Sikkantar.

Tirupparankunram is praised by poets Saint Arunagiri, Kachiappa Guruparar, Saint Tirugnanasambandar and Saint Sundarar. This temple is dedicated to the element of Earth — Prithivi.

The temple of Lord Muruga at Tirupparankunram is on the northern side of the hill. The architectural and sculptural beauty of this temple are exquisite.

It is the place where Lord Muruga married Deivanai. So even now this place is considered more suitable to conduct marriages. As Muruga is in a very joyful mood, He is expected to confer boons more freely to his devotees.

(II) **Tirucheeralaivai (Tiruchendur)** : The second base is Tiruchendur (which is the focal theme of this

book) where Lord Muruga has fulfilled the purpose of His *avatar*.

(II) **Tiruvavinankudi (Palani)**: It is said, "In Tirupprankunram, He (Muruga) is with and without form and in Tirucheeralavai, He is with form; while in Tiruverakam, He moves through the potency of the Mantras, sacred formula and secret invocation".¹

Palani is also known as 'Avinankudi' and 'Pothini'. It is called Palani because Lord Siva and Uma Devi called Muruga endearingly as "Thou! Fruit of Pure Knowledge" (ஞானப்பழம் நீ). Lord Muruga is in the form of Sanyasin (சந்தியாசி-ஆண்டி) in this temple to grace the devotees. Puranas say that when Lord Muruga failed to get the Mango fruit in the competition with His brother Ganesa, He came there in frustration and stayed in the hill.

The temple of Lord Muruga at Palani is situated beautifully on the top of the hill, called Palani, which is 1068 feet above the sea level. It is part of western ghates, nearly 56 K. M. from Dindigal in the Madurai District.

Climbing the flight of 697 steps of this magnificent hill, which commands a panoramic view of the lush green fields and the flora along the hill slope is a very thrilling experience for the devotees. While ascending the steps with the Lord's name on their lips they feel that every step upward has corresponding spiritual elevation.

¹. Ratna Navaratnam, 'Karthikeya — The Divine Child', P. 56.

On the top of the hill, the shrine of Palaniyandavar stands with Giri prakara and inner prakara and various mandapas. The idol in the temple was said to be installed by the great siddha, called Boga. So (பஞ்சாமிர்தம்) (mixture of five fruits) showered on the idol of Palaniyandavar is very famous. It is having medicinal value.

Nakkirar and other Sangam poets have sung in praise of this mount of meditation.

(IV) Tiruverakam (Swamimalai): It is now called Swamimalai. It is the place where Lord Muruga taught Siva, His father the meaning of *pranava mantra* ('OM'). Here He is worshipped by the incantation of His letters six 'Sa Ra Va Na Ba Va'.

The temple at Swamimalai is at the top of an artificial rock (குன்று) of 60 feet high. This temple is different from other temples of Muruga on the hills. Every prakara is situated one above the other. There are three gates to this temple. If we enter through south gate, we see Kalyana Mandapa on the left side. We worship Meenakshi Sundareswarar in the shrine built in this first prakara.

There are sixty steps in this temple to indicate the sixty years of the Tamil era. If we climb 28 steps, we reach the second prakara. If we go 32 steps further we are in the upper prakara. We worship Lord Muruga in the sanctum sanctorum where He stands in all His splendour to bestow His boons on His devotees.

(V) Kunruthoradal: The word 'Kunruthoradal' literally means, 'dancing on ever hill'. It is said that Lord Muruga

who is the God of the hilly regions, prefers dance of sports on every hill. But Kunruthoradal particularly denotes Thanigaimalai which is 13 K. M. north of Arakonam.

It is at Thanigaimalai that Muruga has subdued his anger and become calm. 'Thanigai' (தணிகை) in Tamil means 'to reduce'. This place is also called 'Seepurangiri', 'Thanikasalam' and 'Seruthani' (செருத்தணி) (anger reduced).

The temple of Tiruttani is at the top of the hill which is 400 feet high. There are 365 steps which indicate the days in a year. This means that we have to worship God throughout the year and we pass every day with the grace of Lord Muruga.

There are four prakaras in this temple. We can worship Lord Muruga in the sanctum sanctorum, facing east. There are distinct shrines for Valli and Deivanai, south and north respectively.

According to Purana, Vallimalai is near Thiruthanikai where Muruga met Valli and courted.

According to some scholars Kunruthoradal would include many hill stations such as Surilimalai (112 K. M. from Madurai, near Kambam), Chennimalai (32 K. M. from Erode), Viralimalai (30 K. M. from Tiruchi) and Marudamalai (very near to Coimbatore).

(VI) **Pazhamuthircholai**: The sixth great base is 20 K. M. north of Madurai. It is also called Alagarkoil where there is a temple for Thirumal, the father-in-law of Lord Muruga.

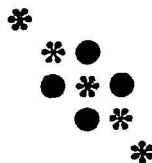
The shrine for Lord Muruga in this hill is in the middle of the grove of sweet and riped fruits. It is also known as 'Solai Malai' i. e. hill of the groves.

The devotees who go to this temple, first offer their worship to Thirumal in the shrine at the bottom of the hill and then worship Lord Muruga in the middle of groves at the top of the hill.

It is said that Avaai, great Tamil poet, saw Lord Muruga in this hill as a shep'herd boy who showered fruits 'naval' (நாவல்பழம்) after asking her whether she required 'hot fruit' (சுட்டபழம்) or 'cold fruit' (சுடாதபழம்).

There is a wonderful spring at the top of the hill, called 'Noopura Gangai' (நூபுர கங்கை). It is very pleasant to drink the cool water of this spring and have bath in it.

Great Experience : It would be a great experience for the devotees to visit all these six great bases of Lord Muruga. Such a visit provides them with an opportunity to realise the vanity of ego and to feel the greatness of God.



7. Tiruchendur — a Pilgrim Centre

Tiruchendur, the abode of Lord Muruga is a sea — shore town and it is a developing pilgrim centre. The devotees who came to this great temple can worship not only Lord Muruga but also other deities in and around Tiruchendur. They could also visit many places which are on the way to Tiruchendur and easily accessible from Tiruchendur.

Subsidiary Temples of Lord Muruga: In addition to the temple of Lord Muruga, Valliamman Cave (north of main shrine) and Thoondugai Vinayagar, there are the following temples at Tiruchendur to which the devotees go eagerly to worship:-

1. Sivakkulandeeswarar and Anandavalliamman Temple — (In the middle of Tiruchendur)
2. Sorna Vana Sashta Temple (In Sannathi Street — Behind Siddheswar mandapa)
3. Amirdha Guna Vinayagar Temple (Eastern side of the ninth Sandhi Street)
Ananda Sashta Temple (First Sandhi Street-Cross Street)
5. Sokkar Temple (West Mada Street)
6. Adkonda Vinayagar Temple (In between North Mada Street and North Car Street)
7. Margathavalli Amman Koil (Near Big Car)
8. Mutharamman Temple (South Street)
9. Arasalwar Temple — (Near the village tank — West of Tiruchendur)

10. Uchini Mahali Amman — (On the way to the railway station from north car street)
11. Veyulukandamman Temple (Sabapathipuram Street)
12. Sabapathi Vinayagar Temple (Sabapathipuram Street)
13. Thalaiyunri Sastha Temple (At a distance of 3 K. M. in the Tiruchendur — Tirunelveli Road)
14. Kurumalayyan Sastha Temple—(West Tiruchendur Village)
15. Praneswarar Temple —(Omanallur)
16. Kanchi Vijaya Kachikonda Pandeswarar Temple (Kulasekarapattinam)

There are many Ayyankoilis such as Arunjunai Katha Ayyan, Karikkol Ayyan etc. near Tiruchendur.

Transport Facilities: Tiruchendur is well connected with other important places and cities in the south. The metre gauge railway line from here connects it with Tirunelveli. There are frequent bus services from Tuticorin (40 K. M.), Tirunelveli (58 K. M) Kanyakumari (104 K.M), Courtalam (115 K. M.) , Madurai (173 K. M.) and Rameswaram (258 K. M.). One can reach Tiruchendur either through road or rail without any difficulty.

However a coastal railway line linking Tiruchendur with Cape Comorin has been an imperative need of the pilgrims.

Lodging Facilities : The pilgrims can find many lodges at Tiruchendur. The Subrahmaniya Swami Devasthanam provides lodging facilities in the well

equipped air conditioned cottages, Devar Cottage, Senthilandavar Viduthi with four types of rooms, Rest House and Shanmuga Vilas Viduthi. They charge very reasonable rent as service motive takes precedence. Since these lodges are around the temple, the pilgrims who stay here can easily go to the temple and breathe the divine air all around.

There are also numerous madams (choultries) built by various communities inside Tiruchendur. New hotels and lodges are also springing up owing to the growing needs of the pilgrims.

Other Interesting Places Near Tiruchendur : There are many interesting places to which the pilgrims can go while availing themselves of the opportunity of visiting Tiruchendur. They are:-

- (1) Navatiruppathi — Nine Sacred shrines of Lord Vishnu at Srivaikuntam, Varaguna — mangai, Tiruplingudi, Perunkulam, Rettai Tirupathi, Thentirupperai, Tirukkolor and Alwar Tirunagari — all are situated on the banks of river Tamraparani.
- (2) Kalugumalai — A beautiful grotto carved out of a rock for Lord Subrahmanya.
- (3) Tirunelveli — S w a m i Nellaiyappar and Kanthaimathiamman Temple.
- (4) Krishnapuram — Venkatachalapathi Temple known for its grand architecture.
- (5) Ammanpuram — Arunjunaikatha Ayyanar Temple—a beautiful picnic spot with a spring surrounded by sand dunes called 'theri' (தேரி).

- (6) Manappadu — A mini light house and famous catholic church — well known for its famous palm - leaf products.
- (7) Thirukkurungudi - Alagiya Nambirajar Temple,
- (8) Valliyoor — Subrahmanya Swami Temple — Sanctum in the cave.
- (9) Nanguneri — Vanuvamalai Perumal Temple with an oil well.
- (10) Kanyakumari — Kumariamman Temple and Swami Vivekananda rock.
- (11) Susindram — Stanumalayapperumal Temple.
- (12) Papanasam — Papanasam Swami Temple.
- (13) Tenkasi — Kasi Viswanath Swami Temple.
- (14) Courtallam — Kasi Viswanatha Temple and natural falls.
- (15) Paimpozhil — Murugan Temple on the hill, Tirumalai.
- (16) Sankarankoil — Sankaranarayana Swamy Temple.
- (17) Tuticorin — Harbour.
- (18) Panchalankurichi — Fort of Kattabomman.
- (19) Ettayapuram — Bharathi (Great Tamil Poet) Mandap.

Importance of Pilgrimage: The importance of pilgrimage is realised by the Hindus from very early periods. People of the south go to Mount Kailas and Kasi and people of the north come to Rameswaram and

Kanyakumari. It breaks the narrow domestic walls of our material life; opens up new avenues of contacts with unknown people; gives us rare opportunities to think about God and provides chance to realise ourselves and God. So people may be encouraged to cultivate the habit of going on pilgrimage to holy places and enrich themselves spiritually.

Welcome to Tiruchendur : Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur stands here to pour out His grace to the devotees who come with the spiritual thirst to worship Him. We may join with Nakkirar and pray as follows :-

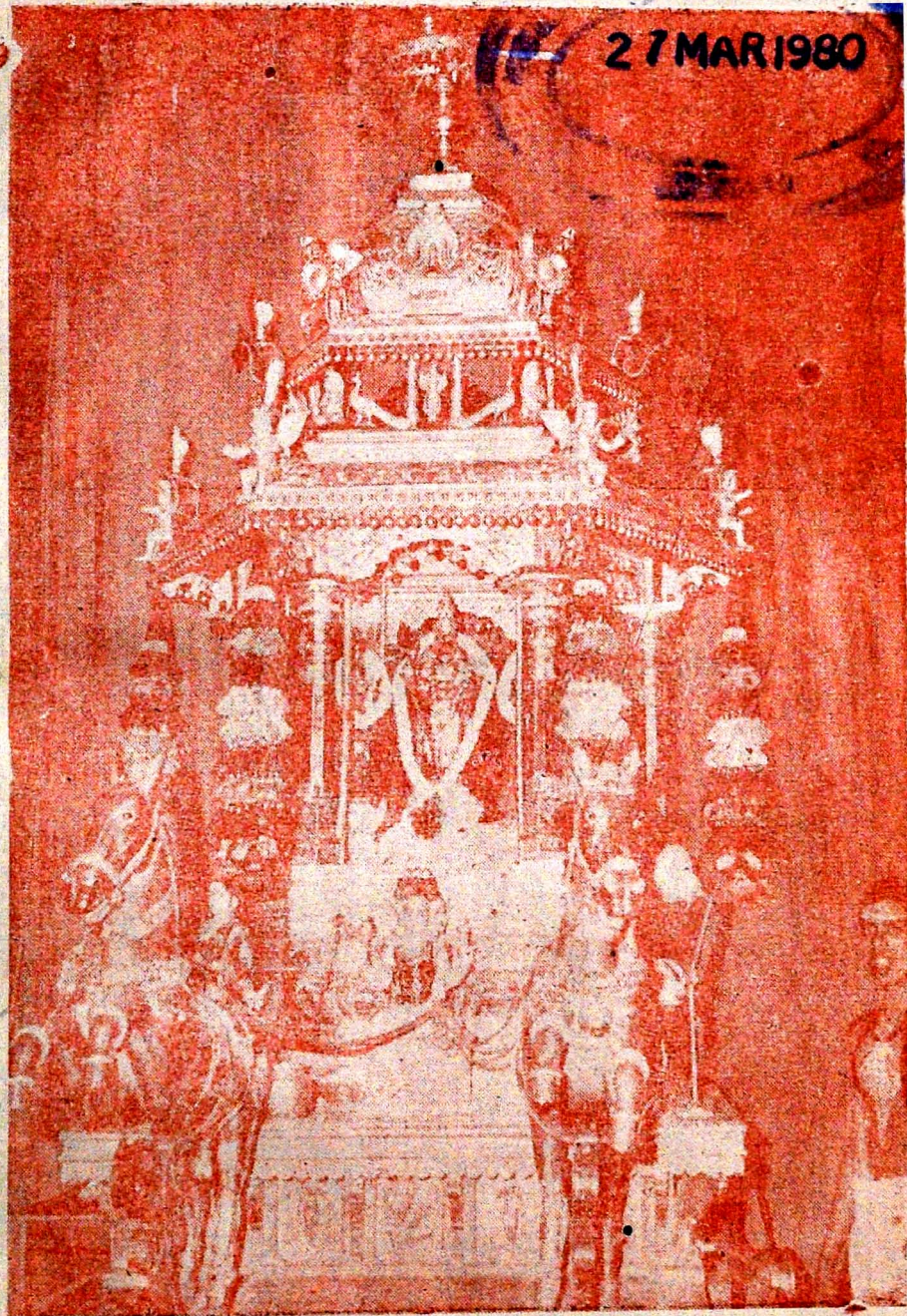
*“List! Heavenly drums and strong horns blow aloud,
White conch shells and drums resound like thunder;
The peacock with variegated plumes so beautiful sways
On the victorius banner of Muruga,
As he speeds up the aerial way with rapid pace,
And alights in the famed city of Tiruchiravai.
‘Lo! his munificence in abodes of this nature;
and besides these’”.*

— Thirumurugarrupadai 119 – 125*

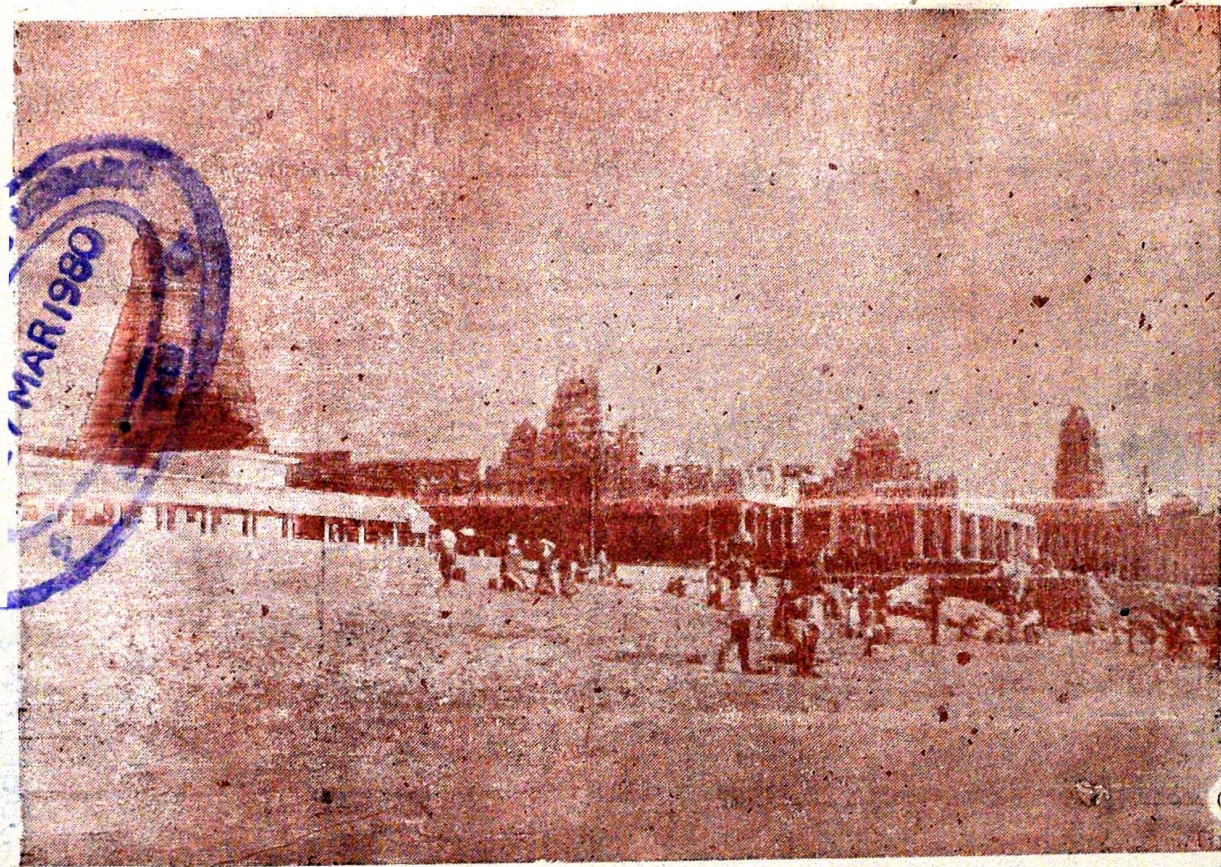


* Translation rendered by Ratna Navaratnam,
‘Karttikeya — The Divine Child’, P. 27

27 MAR 1980



• The Gold Car of Tiruchendur



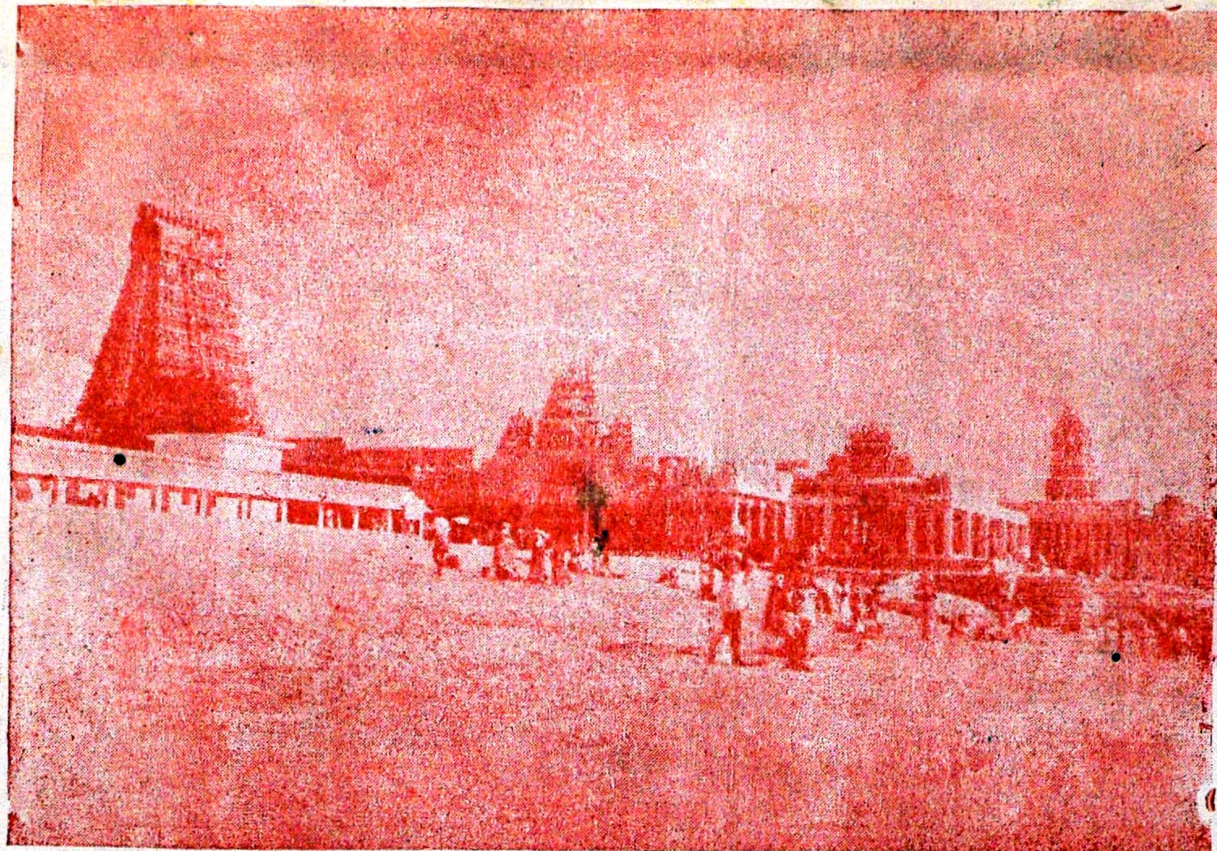
The Sea-shore View of the Tiruchendur Temple

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, "The Science of Being And Art of Living", International SRM publications, London, 1963.
2. Radhakrishnan, S. Dr. "The Hindu Way of Life", George Allen and Unwin, Bombay, 1964.
3. Ratna Navaratnam, "Karttikeya — The Divine Child", Bharatya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 1973.
4. Senthil Thuravi, "Two Shore Temples", Sastha Publication, Tiruchendur.
5. Somasundaram, J. M. "Tiruchendur — The Sea-Shore Temple of Subramanyam", Tiruvavaduthurai Mutt, 1948.
6. Subramaniyan, N. Dr. "Sangam Polity", Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966,
7. கணபதி சாஸ்திரிகள், T. S. "திருச்செந்தூர் தல புராணம்", திருச்செந்தூர், 1976.
8. கவி யாண சுந்தரனார், திரு. வி. க. "முருகன் அல்லது அழகு", சிவகாமி அச்சகம், அண்ணாமலை நகர், 1977.

9. சுந்தரவடிவேலனார், க. பொ. , “அருட்குமரனின் ஆறுபடை வீடுகள்” பைலட் பப்ளிகேஷன்ஸ், சென்னை, 1978.
10. செ ந் து றை முத்து, புலவர், : “திருக்கோயில் தத்துவம்”, ஸ்ரீ இந்து பப்ளிகேஷன்ஸ், சென்னை, 1978.
11. முத்தையா செ ட் டி யார், வி. “திருச்செந்தி லாதிபன்”, தேவகோட்டை, 1979.





The Sea-shore View of the Tiruchendur Temple